

CLAIMS:

1. A computer-implemented method comprising the steps of:  
obtaining scanned information from a plurality of stores to determine an identification  
and price paid for purchased items;  
5 recording in a price-paid database at least one of an item identification and the price-  
paid for each of the purchased items; and  
publishing the price-paid database.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of obtaining scanned information  
comprises:

obtaining a customer identification associated with each purchased item.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the step of obtaining a customer identification  
comprises:

scanning at least one of a frequent shopper card, a credit card, a club member card,  
and a debit card.

4. The method of Claim 2, wherein the step of obtaining a customer identification  
comprises:

scanning at least one of a fingerprint, retinal scan, and a signature.

5. The method of Claim 2, wherein the step of obtaining scanned information  
comprises:

recording the identification and the price paid for each of the purchased items in a  
checkout computer; and

recurrently uploading the recorded identification and the price-paid to a central  
computer containing the price-paid database.

6. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

comparing the price paid to an inventory list price;

recording at least one of the inventory list price and a price differential between the inventory list price and the price paid; and

recurrently uploading the at least one of the inventory list price and the price differential to the central computer.

5           7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising:  
recording at least one of the customer identification and a store identification; and  
recurrently uploading the at least one of the customer identification and a store identification to the central computer.

10           8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the step of recording comprises:  
formatting the price-paid database into columnar entries, wherein the columnar entries include at least one of the customer identification, the store identification, the purchase item identification, the price-paid, the list price, and the price differential.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein the step of publishing comprises:  
providing on a web page the price-paid database.

15           10. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of providing comprises:  
selecting from the web page price-paid information from at least one of a store selection, a customer selection, a brand selection, and a sales category selection within a specified district.

20           11. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of selecting comprises:  
determining one of a zip code and an area code of the user; and  
restricting the specified district to an area within the one of a zip code and an area code.

25           12. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of selecting comprises:  
determining one of a remote district, a regional district, and a national district for the user; and

restricting the specified district to an area within the one of a remote district, a regional district, and a national district.

13. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of providing comprises:  
selecting from the web page price-paid information from stores within a specified  
5 district.

14. The method of Claim 2, wherein the step of obtaining scanned information  
comprises:

recurrently requesting transfer of the identification and the price-paid from a checkout  
computer to a central computer containing the price-paid database.

15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising:  
recurrently requesting transfer of at least one of an inventory list price and a price  
differential between the inventory list price and the price paid to the central computer.

16. The method of Claim 15, further comprising:  
recurrently requesting transfer of at least one of a customer identification and a store  
identification to the central computer.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the step of recording comprises:  
formatting the price-paid database into columnar entries, wherein the columnar entries  
include at least one of the customer identification, the store identification, the purchase item  
identification, the price-paid, the list price, and the price differential.

18. The method of Claim 17, wherein the step of publishing comprises:  
providing on a web page the price-paid database.

19. The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of providing comprises:  
selecting from the web page price-paid information from at least one of a store  
selection, a customer selection, a brand selection, and a sales category selection within a  
25

specified district.

20. The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of selecting comprises:  
determining one of a zip code and an area code of the user; and  
restricting the specified district to an area within the one of a zip code and an area  
code.

21. The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of selecting comprises:  
determining one of a remote district, a regional district, and a national district for the  
user; and  
restricting the specified district to an area within the one of a remote district, a  
regional district, and a national district.

22. The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of providing comprises:  
selecting from the web page price-paid information from stores within a specified  
district.

23. A computer readable medium containing program instructions for execution on a  
computer system which when executed by the computer system, cause the computer system  
to perform the method recited in any one of the claims 1-22.

24. A system for enabling a user to obtain psuedo-real-time data on prices paid for  
purchased items, comprising:

a scanner configured to determine an identification of the purchased items;  
a checkout computer connected to the scanner and configured to determine a price  
paid for each of the purchased items; and

a central computer configured to record from a plurality of stores in a price-paid  
database at least one of an item identification and the price-paid for each of the purchased  
items and to publish the price-paid database.

25. The system of Claim 24, wherein the scanner is configured to determine a

customer identification.

26. The system of Claim 25, wherein the scanner is configured to scan at least one of a frequent shopper card, a credit card, a club member card, and a debit card.

5 27. The system of Claim-25, wherein the scanner is configured to scan at least one of a fingerprint, retinal scan, and a signature.

28. The system of Claim 24, wherein the checkout computer is configured to record a customer identification and the price paid for each of the purchased items in a checkout computer and recurrently upload the recorded identification and the price-paid to the central computer.

29. The system of Claim 28, wherein the checkout computer is further configured to compare the price paid to an inventory list price, record at least one of the inventory list price and a price differential between the inventory list price and the price paid, and recurrently upload the at least one of the inventory list price and the price differential to the central computer.

30. The system of Claim 29, wherein the checkout computer is configured to record at least one of the customer identification and a store identification and recurrently upload the at least one of the customer identification and a store identification to the central computer.

20 31. The system of Claim 30, wherein the central computer is configured to format the price-paid database into columnar entries, wherein the columnar entries include at least one of the customer identification, the store identification, the purchase item identification, the price-paid, the list price, and the price differential.

32. The system of Claim 31, wherein the central computer is configured to publish a web page including the price-paid database.

33. The system of Claim 32, wherein the web page includes price-paid information from at least one of a store selection, a customer selection, a brand selection, and a sales category selection within a specified district.

34. The system of Claim 24, wherein the central computer is configured to recurrently request transfer of the identification and the price-paid from the checkout computer.

35. The system of Claim 34, wherein the central computer is configured to recurrently request transfer of at least one of an inventory list price and a price differential between the inventory list price and the price paid from the checkout computer.

36. The system of Claim 35, wherein the central computer is configured to recurrently request transfer of at least one of customer identification and a store identification from the checkout computer.

37. The system of Claim 36, wherein the central computer is configured to format the price-paid database into columnar entries, wherein the columnar entries include at least one of the customer identification, the store identification, the purchase item identification, the price-paid, the list price, and the price differential.

38. The system of Claim 37, wherein the central computer is configured to publish a web page including the price-paid database.

39. The system of Claim 38, wherein the web page includes price-paid information from at least one of a store selection, a customer selection, a brand selection, and a sales category selection within a specified district.

40. A price-paid database aggregated from a plurality of retail stores, comprising:  
a first field for storing an item identification corresponding to an item purchased from the plurality of retail stores; and  
a second field for storing the price paid for said item purchased.

41. The database of Claim 40, further comprising:  
a third field for storing a customer identification.

42. The database of Claim 41, wherein the customer identification comprises:  
at least one of a frequent shopper card, a credit card, a club member card, and a debit  
5 card.

43. The database of Claim 41, wherein the customer identification comprises:  
at least one of a fingerprint, retinal scan, and a signature.

44. The database of Claim 40, further comprising:  
a third field for storing at least one of the inventory list price and a price differential  
10 between the inventory list price and the price paid.

45. The database of Claim 44 wherein the price-paid database is configured to format  
the price-paid database into columnar entries, wherein the columnar entries include at least  
one of the customer identification, the store identification, the purchase item identification,  
the price-paid, the list price, and the price differential.

46. The database of Claim 45, wherein the information in the price-paid database is  
formatted to be displayed as a web page.

47. The database of Claim 46, wherein the web page permits selection from the web  
page of price-paid information from at least one of a store selection, a customer selection, a  
20 brand selection, and a sales category selection within a specified district.

48. The database of Claim 46, wherein the web page permits selection from the web  
page of price-paid information by one of a user zip code and a user telephone area code.

49 50. The database of Claim 46, wherein the web page permits selection from the web  
25 page of price-paid information by one of a remote district, a regional district, and a national

district.

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